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ANCIENT KANGRA AND THE *BAIJNATH-PRAŚASTIS*

By

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ANCIENT KANGRA AND THE BAIJNATH-PRASASTIS

INSCRIPTIONS

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D. KANGRA

What is now known as Kangra, originally formed part of the Kingdom of Trigarta also called Jalandhara. This Kingdom at the time of its greatest expansion comprised all the territory between the Satlej and the Ravi in the outer hills and the Jalandhara Doab in the plains. The two names Trigarta and Jalandhara appear to have been used as synonyms for the whole Kingdom.¹ At a later period, however, the name Trigarta came to be applied to Kangra only and as Trigadh was in use for the Kangra State till early 19th century.

Early History

According to the evidence furnished by the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini, Trigarta was a Republican State like several others of this type in Northern India in the 6th century B. C. Pāṇini refers to Trigarta as *Saṅgha* or a Republic.² Soon after, the republican form of Government appears to have been abolished in favour of the monarchal regime and we find a king named Suśarman ruling over Trigarta at the time of the Great War. Suśarman is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*³ as a Trigarta Chief who took part in the great war and fought on the side of the Kauravas. He is mentioned in the *Vamśāvalī* of the Katoch family of Kangra as Suśarma-candra and figures as 234th king from its mythical founder named Bhūma-

1. *Hemakośa*, 4. 23; *Baijnath-Prasastis*, lines 6, 10, 18, 20, 21; *Epigraphia India*, Vol. I, pp. 97 ff.; where Trigarta and Jalandhara have been used as synonyms.

2. Pāṇini, *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, V. 3. 116. Pāṇini refers to the Republics as *Saṅghas* as compared to Kingdoms which are designated by him as *Janapadas*.

3. For several references of Trigarta in the *Mahābhārata* see Sorenson's *Index to Mahābhārata*, p. 687.

candra.⁴ The name *Suśarmapura* for Kangra appears to be due to this King.

The history of Trigarta in the immediately following period is not known. In the 2nd century B. C. the republican constitution was again revived in this Hill State, as is attested to by the numismatic evidence. Coins bearing the legend *Trakata-janapadasya* have been discovered which on palaeographic grounds can be assigned to the 2nd century B. C.⁵ The legend 'Trakata-janapadasya' has been translated as 'of the Trigarta republic'. It would thus follow that Trigarta was a republic in the 2nd century B. C. and the coinage was issued in the name of the republic.

The history of Trigarta in the following periods is again veiled in obscurity. In the absence of any literary or epigraphical evidence, it may be presumed that Trigarta acknowledged the supremacy of the imperial Kuśāṇas whose sway extended over Jālandhara where, as is believed by some, the fourth Buddhist council was convened by the great Kuśāṇa emperor Kaṇiṣka.

The Kuśāṇa empire declined in the 3rd century A. D. and several republics which had ruled in the Punjab independently in the centuries preceding the Christian era and had to submit to the Kuśāṇa influence during the intervening period, again asserted their independence and some of them, as for example the Yaudheyas and the Kunindas, again struck coins. A large number of coins of these Republics belonging to the 3rd and 4th centuries A. D. has been discovered.⁶ It is not known if like these Republics, Trigartas also asserted independence after the collapse of the Kuśāṇa empire. No coins of the Trigartas in the post-Kuśāṇa period have come to light so far. On the other hand, the District of Kangra has yielded a few coins of Yaudheya currency having legends in the characters of 3rd and 4th centuries A. D.⁷ This has led Altekar⁸ to conclude

4. The origin of the name Katoch is uncertain. Moorcraft who visited Nadaun in 1820 states that the Kingdom of Kangra then contained three Provinces viz., Katoch, Changa and Palam. Katoch seems to have included the country around and to the west of Kangra and it may perhaps be surmised that this was the original name and the nucleus of the State, *vide.*, Vogel and Hutchison, *History of Panjab Hill States*, Vol. 1, p. 207.

5. Allan, *Coins of Ancient India*, p. cxxxix.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. ciii, cli, clic.

7. *Ibid.*, p. cli; Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India*, pp. 79.

8. Altekar, *Vākāṭaka Gupta Age*, p. 29.

that the District of Kangra along with those of Ludhiana, Rohtak, Karnal, Delhi, Saharanpur, etc. which have yielded large hoards of Yaudheya coinage, was ruled by the Yaudheyas from the beginning of the 3rd century A. D. However, the discovery of a few Yaudheya coins from Kangra does not constitute the proof of the political domination of the Yaudheyas over the Trigartas as suggested by Altekar.

Yaudheyas submitted to the political might of Samudragupta in the 4th century A. D. It is, however, doubtful if Trigarta lay within the Gupta empire which extended up to the eastern part of the Punjab. There is no evidence to this effect either in the Allahabad Inscription of Samudragupta or in the records of his successors. The history of Trigarta during the Gupta period is thus a blank. Nor is anything known of this Hill State in the immediately following period till we come to the first half of the 7th century when Jālandhara was visited by the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang.⁹ He describes the Kingdom of Jālandhara about 100 li or 167 miles in length from east to west and 800 li or 133 miles in breadth from north to south. If these dimensions are correct, the Kingdom of Jālandhara as pointed out by Cunningham¹⁰ must, then, have included the State of Chamba on the north with Mandi and Suket on the east and Satadru on the south-east. It would seem that Jālandhara after the disintegration of the Gupta empire had grown into a big State which also included Trigarta in the outer hills. This state was ruled by a king named Udit¹¹ who has been identified by Cunningham¹² with the King Adima or Adita of the *Vāñśāvalī* of the Katoch family.

The paucity of material prevents us from tracing the history of Trigarta in the subsequent periods in a continuous strain. However, it is likely that the Hill State continued to be ruled by the successors of Adita, the scions of the Katoch family. The Katoch Chiefs seem to have acknowledged the supremacy of the powerful Kārkoṭa rulers of Kashmir in the 8th century A. D. Jālandhara of which Trigarta formed a part, is included in the

9. Watters, *On Yuonchwang*, Vol. I, p. 296.

10. Cunningham, *Ancient Geography*, p. 159.

11. Watters, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

12. *Op. cit.*, p. 159.

*Rajatarangini*¹³ among the territories conquered by the famous Karkota ruler Lalitaditya.

About the end of the 9th century A. D., Trigarta was ruled by a king named Prthivī-candra¹⁴ who probably was a Katoch. He was the protégé of the Utpala ruler Śāṅkaravarman of Kashmir (883-902 A. D.) and is referred to in the *Rajatarangini*¹⁵ to have sent his son as a hostage to the Kashmir ruler. The name of Prthivī-candra does not appear in the *Vamśavalī* of the Katoch family of Kangra but the cognomen *Candra* which is borne by all the rulers of the Katoch family right from its founder Bhūma-candra makes it highly probable that Prthivī-candra also belonged to the famous Katoch line.

In the beginning of the 10th century A. D., Trigarta was subdued by the founder of the neighbouring Hill State of Chamba, named Sāhilla-varman. In the copper plate inscription of the Chamba rulers, Soma-varman and Āsaṭa (11th century),¹⁶ Sāhilla-varman is stated to have forcibly reduced the lord of Trigarta into submission. The Trigarta Chief, however, later became a friend and an ally of Sāhilla-varman and is stated to have assisted the latter in his fight against the confederate forces of the Kiras, Saumatikas and the Durgaras.¹⁷ *as noted above.*

13. *Rajatarangini*, IV. 177.

14. *Ibid.*, V. 144.

15. *Ibid.*, V. 144-47.

16. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, Vol. I, No. 24, pp. 182.

17. The Saumatikas, not known from any other source, have been identified by Vogel, (*op. cit.*), with the people of Sumarta, a tract in the former Hill State of Basohli or Balor mentioned by Kalhaṇa under the name of *Vallapura*. Durgara evidently devotes modern Dugar or Jammu. The Kiras who are mentioned in several epigraphic and literary records are generally believed to be a people of ancient Kangra which had the main settlement at Kiragrama or modern Baijnath. However, it would seem that the Kiras in the present context were distinct from the Kiras of Trigarta, since Trigarta was an ally rather than an enemy of Chamba. Vogel and Kielhorn on the evidence of the *Rajatarangini*, VIII. 2767 and *Bṛhatśāṅhitā*, XIV. 29 and Persian texts, (*Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. ix, p. 7), which mention Kiras along with the Kashmirians, identified Kiras with a tribe or people who were settled in the neighbourhood of Kashmir. According to Vogel, (*Antiquities of Chamba State*, Vol. I, p. 99), Kiras in the present case seem to have acted as mercenaries in the service of the chief of Durgara who were sent by him to the assistance of Saumatikas in their fight against Sāhilla who appears to have come into collision with them while extending his dominions down the Ravi Valley.

In the beginning of the 11th century Trigarta is said to have been ruled by the Katoch king Jagdīśa-candra who was 436th in descent from Bhūma-candra, the mythical founder of the State.¹⁸ During his rule in 1009 A. D. the fort of Kangra, famous all over India on account of its fabulous wealth, was besieged by Mahmud of Ghazni who after capturing the fort seized the entire wealth stored therein. Cunningham attributes the vast accumulation of wealth in the fort to Shahi rulers of Kabul. "It is almost impossible," remarks he, "that such a vast amount of treasure could have been accumulated by the petty Rājas of the Kangra valley, but it is quite conceivable that it may have been the hoard of the Hindu princes of Kabul."¹⁹ There is evidence of the close connection of the Shahis with Nagarkot or Kangra. According to Alberuni the fort of Kangra preserved the genealogical roll of the Turkish Shahi princes of Kabul—the immediate predecessors of Hindu Shahi princes—for sixty generations.²⁰ The Khajuraho Inscription of Yaśovarman Candela²¹ mentions a king of Kira or Kangra with the title Shahi. Besides, large hoards of Dirhams or silver coins of the Shahis have been discovered at several places in the Kangra Valley. This points to the connection of Shahis with this Hill State.

The conquest of Punjab by Mahmud was only partial and we find Trigarta or Jālandhara still ruled by a Katoch king named Indu-candra in the 2nd quarter of the 11th century.²² The king was the contemporary of Ananta-deva of Kashmir (A. D. 1028-63) and is referred to in the *Rājataranginī*²³ to have given his two daughters in marriage to the Kashmir ruler. The name Indu-candra is not traceable in the local *Vāṁśāvalī* but the name ending *Candra* indicates that he was a Katoch.

The details of the history of this Hill State in the immediately following period are not known. However, it is likely that the Katoch rule continued uninterrupted in the State, as in the beginning of the 13th century we find it ruled by a king named Jaya-candra.

18. Vogel and Hutchison, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

19. *Archaeological Survey of India, Report*, Vol. V, pp. 155-56.

20. Alberuni's *India*, Translation Sachau, Vol. II, p. 11.

21. *Epigraphia India*, Vol. I, pp. 122 ff.

22. *Archaeological Survey of India, Report*, Vol. V, pp. 155-56.

23. VII. 150, 152.

who most probably was a Katoch. Jaya-candra is mentioned in the two *Baijnath-Praśastis* dated Śaka 1126 or A. D. 1204²⁴ as the ruling chief of Trigarta or Jālandhara. He was first identified by Cunningham²⁵ with Jaya-Mala-candra of the *Vamśāvalī*. This identification based on the erroneous reading of the data of the *Praśastis* was later repudiated by Vogel and Hutchison²⁶ who identified the king with the Katoch chief Jayasimha-candra of the *Vamśāvalī*.

Nothing worthy of note is recorded in the *Praśastis* about Jaya-candra except that he was the sovereign of a baronial house that was ruling this time at Kiragrāma identified with the modern town of Baijnath in Kangra.

The *Praśastis* introduce us to a baronial house which ruled for eight generations at Kiragrāma under the supremacy of the kings of Trigarta. Since last of them ruled in A. D. 1204, we may place the ten chiefs between A. D. 1030 and 1210 allowing an average reign of 20 years to each generation. It would thus follow that this line of Rāṇas established its power at Kiragrāma shortly after the invasion of Sultan Mahmud and the overthrow of the Shahi dynasty. No historical details of these chiefs of Kiragrāma are known. The *Praśastis* contain a brief description of each of them, but the descriptions are purely conventional and it is only occasionally that we meet with information that may be of some real historical importance.

24. *Epigraphia India*, Vol. I, pp. 97 ff. The two *Praśastis* of Baijnath are incised on two large stone slabs in the famous temple of Baijnath at Baijnath (ancient Kiragrāma) in the Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh. The *Praśasti* No. I gives an account of the construction of a temple in honour of Lord Vidyānātha (Baijnath in the vernacular) by two merchant brothers, Manyuka and Āhuka and records the donations made to it by some pious individuals. It contains an eulogistic account of the ruling chief of Kiragrāma named Lakṣmaṇa candra and is dated in the year 80 of the reign of Jaya-candra who was the lord of Trigarta to whom Lakṣmaṇa-candra owed allegiance. The date of the *Praśasti* Sam. 80, *Jyeṣṭha* Śukla Pratipat corresponds to 2nd of May, 1204 A. D. The *Praśasti* No. II contains a brief account of the baronial house of Kiragrāma to which Lakṣmaṇa-candra belonged right from its founder named Kanda. It besides records the donations made to the Śiva temple by the ruling Chief Lakṣmaṇa-candra by his mother Lakṣmaṇa and by the builders of the temple. It is dated in the Śaka year 1126 which corresponds to A. D. 1204.

25. *Op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 178 ff.

26. *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 125.

Kanda (c. 1030-1050 A. D.)

The founder of this baronial house was Kanda. He is described as the root of the matchless family, vanquisher of foes, conqueror of towns and servant of the lotus-feet of the king of Trigarta,²⁷ which would indicate that he was a powerful ruler who established a barony at Kiragrāma and who owed allegiance to the Rājā of Trigarta.

Buddha (c. 1050-1070 A. D.) and Vigraha (c. 1070-1090 A. D.)

Kanda was followed by his son Buddha, a man of pure intellect who, in turn, was succeeded by his son Vigraha who, true to his name, "caused the separation of the wives of his enemies (from their husbands) and who possessed power to crush his foes."²⁸

Dombaka (c. 1019-1110 A. D.)

Vigraha was succeeded by his son Dombaka about whom it is stated that he supported with his hands those falling from high places and together with other princes captured many villages.²⁹ This may indicate that Dombaka rendered assistance to the neighbouring princes when in distress, and in return obtained their help in annexing a number of the surrounding villages. This would also show that Dombaka did not rule over a single village of Kiragrāma but was the master of several villages. Dombaka professed Śaiva-faith and worshipped Śiva.

Bhuvana (c. 1110-1130 A. D.)

Dombaka was followed by his son Bhuvana who like his father was a Śaiva and offered great sacrifices to Lord Śiva. He protected his subjects well and also showed devotion to his sovereign, the lord of Trigarta.³⁰

Kalhaṇa (c. 1130-1150 A. D.) and Bilhaṇa (c. 1150-1170 A. D.)

Bhuvana had a son named Kalhaṇa who is stated to have been a virtuous and powerful ruler. Kalhaṇa was followed by Bilhaṇa who was a faithful vassal of his overlord Hṛdaya-candra and married the latter's daughter named Lakṣaṇikā.³¹

27. *Baijnath-Prasasti*, No. II, lines 11-20.

28. *Ibid.*, 1. 13.

29. *Ibid.*, lines 14-15.

30. *Ibid.*, lines 15-16.

31. *Ibid.*, lines 17-18.

Rāma (c. 1170-1190 A. D.) and **Lakṣmaṇa** (c. 1190 A. D.)

Bilhaṇa had two sons from Lakṣaṇikā, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, the former of whom died early, Lakṣmaṇa was the ruling chief when the *Praśastis* were composed. He was a powerful ruler who kept intact the territories held by his ancestors.³² He was a worshipper of Śiva and allotted daily six *Drammas* of money collected in the customs house at Kīragrāma to the Śiva temple erected by the two merchant brothers Manyuka and Āhuka.³³

The *Praśastis* also throw an interesting light on the social and economic conditions of ancient Kangra. We find that the Brahmins who occupied an honoured place in the social hierarchy were piously and charitably disposed. Though largely the recipients of charity and grants they made liberal donations to the religious institutions. Thus in the *Praśastis* we hear of two Brahmins making donations to a Śiva temple. While the former donated two *droṇas* of grain from his lands at Navagrāma,³⁴ the latter contributed half a plough of land from the lands he occupied at the same place.³⁵

As regards the position of women, their plight appears to have been miserable in certain parts of Kangra. Even their chastity was not secure at the hands of the feudal lords. For example, it is stated in the *Praśastis* that the rulers thought the sovereignty over a town to yield its legitimate result only by the rape of the wives of their subjects.³⁶ There were noble exceptions too, as we learn that the ruling chief Lakṣmaṇa-candra of Kīragrāma took a vow after his pilgrimage to Kedar Nath that thence-forth he would treat the wives of others as his own sisters.³⁷ As regards the custom of *Sati* our records indicate that though it was in vogue it was not universally practised. Thus queen Lakṣaṇikā survived her husband Bilhaṇa.³⁸ Widows after the death of their husbands led a life of austerity and piety and took part in religious donations. Thus

32. *Ibid.*, lines 20-21.

33. *Ibid.*, line 27.

34. *Ibid.*, No. I, line 27.

35. *Ibid.*, line 28.

36. *Ibid.*, line 20.

37. *Ibid.*, line 18.

38. *Ibid.*, No. II, line 28.

widowed queen Lakṣaṇikā donated one plough of land to the Śiva temple.³⁹ There are indications that widows had right to property as is indicated by the references to possession of estates by the widowed queen Lakṣaṇikā.

The *Prasastis* furnish evidence of the private ownership of land in ancient Kangra in the 13th century. Among a number of donations made to Śiva temple of Vaidyanātha, they mention the following gifts made by private individuals :

1. Half a plough of land in Navagrāma, donated by Gaṇeśvara.⁴⁰
2. The self-owned land (*nija-bhūḥ*) presented by the merchant Jīvaka for the courtyard of the temple.⁴¹
3. Four ploughs of land in Navagrāma donated by the merchant brothers Manjuka and Āhuka, the builders of the Śiva temple.⁴²

These gifts of land evidently show that the land in Kangra in the 13th century was owned by the private individuals.

Trade in ancient Kangra was carried on by a class of people called *Vaṇik* or merchants.⁴³ They were comparatively a wealthier section in the society and carried on trade in the neighbouring districts as well.⁴⁴ The articles were offered for sale at the stalls called *panyaśālās*.⁴⁵ The articles imported from outside were charged custom duties at the custom posts called *mandapikās*.⁴⁶ The duty was paid in

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*, No. I, line 28.

41. *Ibid.*, line 29.

42. *Ibid.*, No. II, line 30.

43. *Ibid.*, No. I, lines 23, 26, 29.

44. *Ibid.*, No. II, lines 25-26.

45. *Ibid.*, No. II, line 30.

46. *Ibid.*, line 27. We have an interesting statement that the ruling chief Lakṣmaṇa-candra allotted to the Śiva temple daily six *Drammas* of money collected at the *mandapikā*. Bühler on the analogy of the modern Gujarati and Marathi word *māndavī* which he believes to be the modern counterpart of ancient *mandapikā* and which means a 'custom house' renders *mandapikā* as 'custom house' (*vide, Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. I, p. 117 n). The term is also mentioned in the form of

terms of silver coins called *Drammas*.⁴⁷ There were oil mills for extracting oil from the oil seeds.⁴⁸ The *Prasastis* would give us an impression that Kiragrama was a flourishing town in Kangra in the 13th century. The very size, design and architecture of the Baijnath temple as also the number of donations paid to it by the private individuals testify the richness of the resources of the people of this ancient town. The magnitude of donations would also throw light on the religious disposition and the Śaivite propensities of the members of the royal family and of the common people.

mandapika in the Pallava grant of Śiva-Skandavarman (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. I, pp. 2 ff.) where also according to Bühler (*ibid.*, p. 7 n.) it denotes a custom house. It also occurs in the Bilhari stone inscription of Yuvarājadeva II (V. V. Mirashi, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. IV, pp. 204 ff.) where it denotes a market pavillion in the town where various articles brought for sale were assessed and taxed (*ibid.*, p. 223, fn. 2 and p. clxx). It is mentioned along with *sulka* in one of the Bhavanagara inscriptions (*Bhavanagara Sanskrit and Prakrit Inscriptions*, p. 159) and we may assume that the *mandapika* in ancient Kiragrama was a sort of an octroi or custom post situated near the market place in the town where the articles brought for sale were charged octroi or custom duties according to their nature.

47. Bhandarkar, *Lectures on Ancient Indian Numismatics*, p. 207.

48. *Prasasti* No. II, line 29. Oil mill is described as *tailotpīdana-yantram*.

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